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LETTER DATED 23 SEPTEMBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to write to you in connection with the consultation held by the members of the Security Council on 20 September 1996 regarding the recent infiltration into the Republic of Korea by the armed agents of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in a military submarine.

As reported at the consultation of the whole, on 18 September 1996, at approximately 0200 hours local time, a 350-ton, 106-foot military submarine was found about 100 feet offshore, grounded in shallow water near the coastal city of Kangnung, one of the major ports on the eastern coast of the Republic of Korea. The precise location at which the submarine was found was 37 degrees 43 minutes N., 129 degrees 00 minutes E., about 60 miles south of the demilitarized zone that separates the two Koreas.

A special investigative team of the Korean Government has studied the facts and circumstances surrounding this incident. Based upon the accumulation of concrete evidence, including north Korean-made arms and ammunition, the team has determined that the submarine belonged to the north Korean armed forces and that the occupants of the submarine were all officers of the north Korean regular army.

It has also been determined that the crew members and accompanying agents were fully armed, and that all of them went ashore, infiltrating the territory of the Republic of Korea. Although the exact number of the submarine's occupants is not known, it is estimated to be 26.

Thus far, one of the submarine's occupants has been captured alive in the vicinity of the city of Kangnung, 11 have been found dead, presumably shot by their leader, and 9 have been killed through exchanges of fire with the Republic of Korea Army. The rest remain at large.

During the firefight with the north Korean armed agents, three Republic of Korea Army soldiers were killed. Furthermore, owing to the potential danger

involved in the search for the remaining north Korean commandos, particularly for civilians, a dusk-to-dawn curfew has been declared in the province where the submarine was found.

Although the United Nations Command in Korea attempted to deliver a written message to the north Korean side on 19 September, protesting this armed provocation as a clear and flagrant violation of the Korean Armistice Agreement, the north Koreans have refused even to accept it.

On the other hand, the north Korean Government issued a statement on 22 September claiming that the submarine, while on routine training, experienced engine problems and ran aground after drifting in the East Sea. However, the technical findings of the investigative team and other concrete evidence clearly prove that this explanation is a pure fabrication. First, the conspicuous lack of a response by the north Korean Government until five days after the incident belies the truth of their statement. Second, the currents of the East Sea would have steered a drifting vessel in a northerly direction, while the north Korean submarine deliberately moved towards the Kangnung coast from north to south. Third, the submarine never made any kind of distress signal during the period of its alleged engine troubles, and upon reaching the shore, the north Korean armed agents took hostile action against the Republic of Korea.

In the light of all these facts, my Government believes that this incident poses a serious threat to peace and security on and around the Korean peninsula. North Korea's dispatch of armed agents using a military submarine clearly constitutes a grave act of military provocation to the Republic of Korea, as well as a serious violation of the Korean Armistice Agreement. In particular, the Government of the Republic of Korea is concerned that this incident is part of the consistent policy of military provocation which north Korea has put into practice against the Republic of Korea since the end of the Korean War in 1953.

Recalling the consultation held by members of the Security Council on 29 April 1996, regarding north Korea's repeated incursions into the Demilitarized zone, we find it all the more deplorable that north Korea has not yet given up its attempt to dismantle the Korean Armistice Agreement based upon their bellicose policy of unification by military means.

In this regard, I wish to reaffirm that my Government reserves the right to raise this issue in the Security Council, whenever deemed necessary, upon the completion of the investigation by the authorities of the Korean Government, and assure you that members of the Council will be fully informed when a more complete picture of events becomes available. I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) PARK Soo Gil
Permanent Representative